



At-risk students in middle school: Engagement before Disengagement

Dr. Carolyn Gentle-Genitty
Indiana University School of Social Work
cgengtleg@iupui.edu

A young boy with a joyful expression is waving his right hand and holding a yellow pencil in his left hand. He is wearing a light blue shirt and a dark vest. The background shows a classroom setting with desks and a chalkboard.

Overview

- Education as a priority
- Stakes in society
- Discipline and punishment
- Understanding bonding
- Social Bonding
 - Attachment
 - Commitment
 - Involvement
 - Belief

Engagement/ Disengagement

Marks (2000) defines disengagement as ...

- a **mental process** where students **no longer** have an interest and investment **in the work of learning**.

Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris's (2004)

3 types of engagement

- 1) **behavioral** (doing school work, not skipping school);
- 2) **cognitive** (motivation, effort, desire to master tasks); and
- 3) **emotional** (interest, attitudes towards school, teachers, and appreciation for school success).

Truancy

- Definition not widely adopted by all
- 10 or more absences in Indy
 - **Suspended**
 - **Expelled**
- Tracked by combination of attendance records (registers used by homeroom teachers) and school-recorded absences (records kept by the school on overall attendance – sometimes called attendance books)

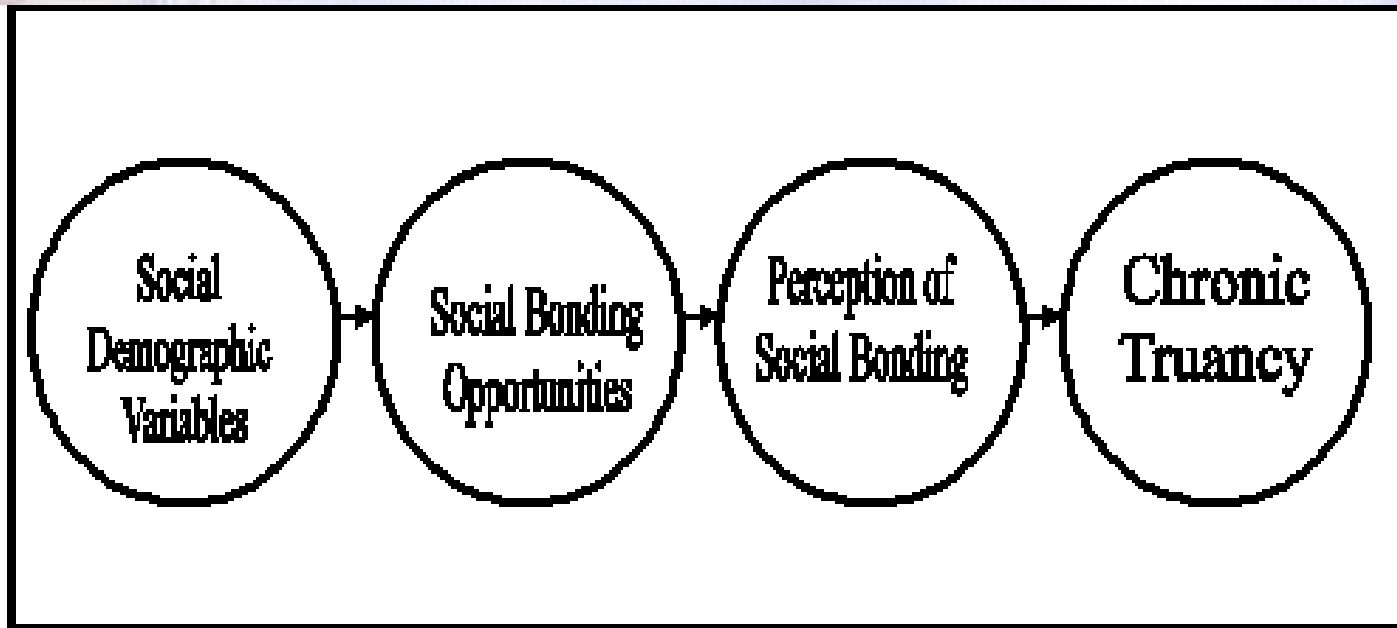
Action taken when absent

Absences	Most Often	Somewhat Often	Least Often
1-3	Parent Notification = 62%	Nothing = 19%	Student Discipline (warning, detention, conference call, talk) = 16%
4-6	Parent Notification with warning = 84%	Student Discipline (make-up time and work, in-school suspension) = 12%	Nothing = 2%
7-9	Parent Notification (with description of court action and formal policies) = 65%	Student Discipline (warning, detention, conference, talk) = 34%	<i>None reported</i>
10+	Outside Assistance (from police, prosecutor, attendance officers, court etc.) = 47%	Parent Notification (court action, formal policies, mandatory conferences etc.) = 30%	Student Discipline (expelled, out of school suspension, loss of credit etc.) = 22% N=99

Polk and Schafer (1972)

❑ if it is “the way institutions relate to young people, and ... [their contributions to the] process that creates youthful deviance, then it is these institutions that must be corrected, not the young who are its casualties” (p.7).

Theoretical Framework



Theory

Social Control Theory

Hirschi (1969)

- ❑ Major theory in understanding delinquent behaviors.
- ❑ Examine connections to people in the creation of a relationship and important factors in delinquency
- ❑ Considered **first theories to examine school social bond** as a primary predictor of delinquency

4 Elements of Social Bond

1. Attachment
2. Commitment
3. Involvement
4. Belief

- ❑ **Higher presence of four elements, the higher the level of social bonding**

Attachment:
Affection and sensitivity
to others

Commitment:
Investment in
conventional society or
stake in conformity

**Hirschi's
Elements of
Social Bond**

Involvement:
Being busy, restricted
opportunities for
delinquency

Belief:
Degree to which person
thinks they should obey
the law

A young boy with a joyful expression is in the bottom left corner of the frame. He is wearing a light blue collared shirt under a dark grey vest. His right arm is raised high with his hand open, palm facing forward, as if waving. His left hand holds a yellow pencil. The background behind him is a blurred classroom setting, showing a desk with various items like a pencil holder and papers, and a chalkboard in the distance. The overall background of the slide is a soft, out-of-focus image of a cloudy sky.

Questions & Discussion